



Office of the Governor

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THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR

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Statement from Health and Human Services Secretary Kim Belshé Regarding Efforts to Reduce Medical Errors

California Secretary of Health & Human Services Kim Belshé said Tuesday that the report titled "Prescription for Improving Patient Safety: Addressing Medication Errors" outlining potential costs of medication errors underscores the need for reducing medication errors as called for in the Governor's Health Care Reform proposal, as well as broader changes the Governor proposes to reduce all medical errors and promote patient safety.

"No one should suffer from errors in the improper prescribing, dispensing or use of medication, or suffer from unnecessary health care-acquired infections," Belshé said. "For this reason, Governor Schwarzenegger's reform proposal calls for dramatic change to prevent not only medication errors, but medical errors as well."

The Governor's Health Care Proposal includes a wide range of changes to improve patient safety and prevent harm by reducing adverse medical events:

- requires that all prescriptions be transmitted electronically from doctor to pharmacist by 2010 to prevent errors caused by illegible handwriting;
- calls upon California hospitals and health care facilities to implement critical safety measures related to infection control, surgical errors, and adverse drug events by 2008;
- enacts new health care safety and reporting requirements; and,
- establishes an Office of Patient Safety within the Department of Public Health.

Last year, the Governor signed legislation to prevent and reduce medical errors through improved reporting and targeted efforts to reduce health care acquired infections. The Governor also signed two executive orders, one setting a goal to achieve 100 percent electronic health data exchange in the next decade; and a second to eliminate obstacles to telemedicine in rural areas.

Secretary Belshé said a 10 percent reduction in medical errors has the potential to reduce health care costs by an estimated \$450 million per year.